

Going with the gut

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by Anand Kumar

If all disease begins in the gut, as Hippocrates declared more than 2,000 years ago, then surely the cures for those diseases must be tied to the gut, as well.

The gut – a.k.a. the gastrointestinal tract that starts at the mouth and ends at the anus – contains trillions of bacterial cells. A majority are good bacteria that reside in the nearly 30 feet of the large and small intestines. These good bacteria are responsible for a person's overall health.

But sometimes a harmful bacterium called *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff) infects the gut, with symptoms that range from diarrhea to inflammation of the colon. Doctors typically treat the infection with antibiotics, but spores from C. diff often linger in the gut and re-infect the patient.

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